

4.9 ASK QUESTIONS DURING INTERVIEWS

What to Know

During a job interview, you will be asked questions about your work experience, education, and goals. Your answers and the nonverbal messages you send determine the impression you make. However, interviewers also learn about you, and remember you, by the questions you ask. They often judge your thinking skills based on the kinds of questions you ask. Interviewers respect candidates who think about their choices carefully, and they appreciate knowing you have done your homework.

During the interview you will also be deciding if the company is a good place to work. Based on the answers to your questions, you will learn about the employer. Look for a match between the company and your goals, needs, and attitudes.

It is a good idea to write out five or six questions before the interview. Revise the questions for each interview based on your research. If a question gets answered before you ask it, choose another question from your list.

Your questions should do two things. They should get the information you want to know about the company. They should also reflect your knowledge of the company. Use the information you learned while doing research on the company to write your questions.

What to Do

Following is a list of suggested questions. Many of these questions could have been answered during research of the company. Do not bother to ask something you already know. Add some questions of your own.

1. I feel I have a clear picture of the job, but could you please give me a few more details?
2. How would you describe a typical day on the job?
3. What are the promotion possibilities?
4. Where does the job fit into the organization?
5. To whom would I report?
6. What other positions would I interface with while performing my duties?
7. How would you describe the work environment?
8. Do your employees work individually or as a team?

9. Where is the job located?
10. What career opportunities exist in the company?
11. What further education or training does the company consider important for my future progress?
12. How are performance reviews done?
13. What is the general management style with regard to customer service, products, or employees?
14. Is this a newly-created position or am I replacing someone?
15. How would I be trained or introduced to the job?
16. What are the department's goals for the year?
17. When will you make a decision?
18. Does the company have a promote-from-within policy?
19. What kind of work schedule does the company have?
20. Does the company require employees to relocate, and if so, how is that done?
21. Does the job require travel and, if so, how much?

The best questions show that you have done research about the company and, at the same time, get you information you really want to know. The following are three examples of this type of question. Of course, you will tailor each question to the company information and the job opening.

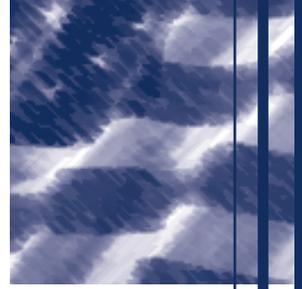
1. What opportunities might I have to work in the _____ area?
2. Your company literature indicated that the company actively encourages continuing education. What opportunities are there?
3. In your Annual Report, the company president talked about a new fiber optics division. What are the research goals of that division and how would it relate to the division where I am applying?

Good questions can use information the interviewer shared with you earlier in the interview. For example, if the interviewer mentioned that the company plans to develop new products, you might ask how those plans will affect the job you are seeking.

Some questions are not appropriate for the first interview. Salary and benefits are important, but save those questions until an offer has been made unless the interviewer brings them up.

Finally, pay attention to the time left in the interview. Usually, the interviewer will invite you to ask questions during the last five to eight minutes of a one hour interview. So, when you have an interview scheduled, write out at least six questions you want to ask to help you get the information you need. Ask only the most important questions. If time is short, say something like: I had hoped to ask you several things, but as our time is short, let me ask the two questions that are most important to me.

If you think that there are any questions on the interviewer's mind that might work against your being considered for the position, you can address these questions yourself. Remember, issues are situationally dependent. Some employer concerns might be military spouse issues, commuting, relocation, military stereotypes, disabilities, etc. You might say "I realize that my home is 40 miles from the office, but I enjoy the time I spend commuting, that wouldn't be a deterrent for me." "I realize that many people believe that someone with a military background might be rigid, but I pride myself on being innovative. I enjoy change" or "I realize that accepting this job would mean relocating to another state, but my family and I have already discussed it and agree that it would be a great opportunity for us." Another way that you can address these issues is by asking the interviewer if there are any questions that you haven't answered to his/her satisfaction. DON'T address limitations that the interviewers aren't already aware of or that won't interfere with your ability to do the job.



Keep away from people who try to belittle your ambitions. Small people always do that, but the really great make you feel that you, too, can become great.(Mark Twain)